

From: Ex. 6 Personal Privacy (PP)

To: R4NPDES.Kampachi

Date: 2/27/2020 2:27:08 PM

Subject: Keep factory fish farms out of the Gulf

Dear EPA,

I write in opposition to EPA approving a National Pollution Discharge Elimination System Permit for Velella Epsilon, a marine finfish aquaculture facility in the Gulf of Mexico. Please heed the overwhelming public opposition and deny the NPDES permit. This would be disastrous for our marine ecosystem.

An industrial ocean fish farm especially has no place in the Gulf of Mexico, which is still struggling to recover from various climate disasters. After all, the Gulf is just starting to recover from the Deepwater Horizon disaster of 2010, which harmed countless marine mammals, and devastated other plants and animals living nearby. Further, in the past two years, the region suffered the worst red tides in over a decade. Opening our waters to yet another industrial facility is far too risky. We absolutely do not need any further pollution in the Gulf.

These massive operations are basically floating factory farms. They devastate our ocean ecosystem, public health, and the local economy. Industrial ocean fish farms contain hundreds of thousands of farmed fish that can spill into the surrounding ocean. They pollute the water with untreated fish waste, excess feed, agricultural drugs and pesticides, heavy metals, and chemicals. They spread disease and pests, threaten wildlife. Moreover, they are putting responsible seafood producers out of business. Farming massive populations of fish in the open ocean causes harm to existing wild fish stocks and their precious habitats and puts sustainable seafood producers out of business.

This project is far too risky to the environment and public health. Any new industrial farms would threaten fishing, tourism, and the livelihoods of millions of local residents.

These underwater feedlots are bad news all around. They are horrible for the environment and public health. They can cause massive, catastrophic fish spills -- like the release of more than 263,000 Atlantic salmon from a floating feedlot in Washington State in 2017 -- which spread disease, risk genetic degradation, and create unnecessary competition with our already struggling native fish stocks. They attract and harm predators and other wildlife. They will cause the demise of our wild fishing communities and related industries by putting downward pressure on fishing prices and creating competition for limited marine space.

Moreover, these industrial fish farms directly discharge a whole host of toxins into public waters beside spilling farmed fish, including anti-foulants, pharmaceuticals, and untreated fish waste. This is the last thing Florida needs, given increasing coral die-off and algal blooms like the red tide. To grant a Clean Water Act NPDES permit for this industry is folly.

Despite Velella Epsilon's proposed plan to operate a "small-scale" pilot facility, it has made clear that it will concurrently seek a commercial permit for a larger, commercial operation. Approving the draft NPDES permit would open the floodgates to massive fish farms, and put our Gulf waters and coastal communities at significant risk.

The EPA is charged with protecting our environment. Permitting industrial ocean fish farms contradicts each aspect of your mission. I urge you to consider the vastly negative public opinion when it comes to this industry and deny the NPDES permit to Velella Epsilon. Please do everything you can to stop further industrialization of our oceans with factory fish farms.

Thank you,

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